

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM LEAD POISONING

Challenge

Childhood lead poisoning is a significant social concern. Elevated lead levels in children's blood can cause serious health problems and learning disabilities. The Indiana State Department of Health needed to identify children at risk for lead poisoning. Doing so would help the Department maintain funding for a targeted screening program.

Action

The Center for Disease Control requested more analysis of the problem before it would continue funding for a targeted blood level screening program in Indiana. To maintain the screening program, Indiana lawmakers considered legislation to require statewide testing of all children. Such an extensive program, however, was proving to be cost-prohibitive for the State.



Instead, the Health Department used their GIS, including existing blood lead level data on 150,000 children, to show where the high risk populations were. Their analysis revealed:

- 80% of the children with elevated blood lead levels lived in 6 counties
- 90% of the children with elevated blood lead levels lived in 17 counties
- All problem areas were dominated by pre-1950's housing and poverty

Results

The results of the analysis identified at-risk populations and provided a scientific basis for the Health Department to do targeted screening, and saved the State of Indiana an estimated \$2 million. Since the assessment, the Center for Disease Control has resumed funding for the program.